

Building a network of Mennonite relationships in Germany

By DAVID STUTZMAN

This past October, we had a gathering of the network we have been forming, a pivotal step in a journey we started almost two years ago when coming to Germany. Sixteen adults, along with ten children participated in a weekend long session, marking the first gathering of many of the people we have gotten to know and built relationships with since embarking on this adventure of creating a network for the Mennonite church in southern Germany.

To begin with, the weekend was truly a remarkable experience, and the affirmation we received was incredibly meaningful. More importantly, the interest and resolve among those at the gathering to move forward with the network was simply exciting.

The weekend had dual purposes of creating space for people to get to know each other as a group, and to explore together concrete steps in forming a network. The theme of the weekend was missional living: how we listen to, respond to, and participate in what God is doing in our own lives, neighborhoods, and faith communities.

The opening session on Friday night started a bit bumpy. I realized only moments before starting that I forgot my laptop! It had all my precious workshop materials and diligently prepared presentations on it. So I had to wing it. In some ways, it turned out to be a blessing and meant we had more personal sharing and informal time together and set a more open and participative tone for the weekend.

Despite all the families with small children staying under one roof at the retreat, the first night went surprisingly well. The Saturday session centered on having people share where they are at in life and share about their dreams. Using different methods, people drew pictures, shared in small groups, and interacted with one

another about their experiences in church and possibilities for missional ministry. Come Saturday night, I was able, to my relief, to download my presentation and give an overview of our concept on the vision, values and structure of the network. This allowed for people to see more tangibly what we were thinking and have a chance to interact with the ideas.

On Sunday morning, we worshipped together and Rebekka led a session on missional relationships, using the Luke 10 passage where Jesus teaches to stay where you are welcome. We then reflected on our experiences from the weekend and what God had stirred in their hearts. This is where things really crystallized, and people opened up about their excitement about the network and interest in seeing it come into fruition. At this point, we felt a huge sense of relief and joy, knowing that we were not in this alone anymore and that we had good people to work with moving forward. The gathering ended with communion and prayer.

The interest and resolve among those at the gathering to move forward with the network was simply exciting.

Of the participants, many are at a crossroads in their life and looking for more meaningful ways to live out their faith, like starting a Bible study, practicing missional hospitality with their neighbors, or planting a new church community. As it was our first gathering, we learned a lot about the potential of such gatherings and the importance of encouraging one another.

As we move forward, we hope the network can be a place for people to find encouragement for starting new initiatives, for new and ongoing church plants, and for



"Network Weekend: dream, learn, exchange."
Courtesy of author

renewal efforts in existing churches. We hope that the network can be a place of support and resourcing for people involved in a variety of missional initiatives and that a network structure can be a place that practices the gathering and sending of disciples.

Concretely, we agreed to meet twice a year, and we formed a planning team for the next gathering set for April. We still don't have a name, but the feeling that there is something now underway and that people are willing to participate is our major take-away.

It was a lot of work for the both of us, as hosts, organizers and parents. We certainly underestimated the amount of energy it would take to care for our (then) two small kids in the midst of keeping the show going. But we were not alone and had wonderful help, for which we are extremely grateful. Bringing these people together for the first time was a culmination of many of our efforts in investing in relationships, getting to know the context, and exploring ideas for a network. It was a bit of a roller coaster ride for us emotionally, but a deeply satisfying experience.



David serves with his wife Rebekka and three children in Bammental, Germany, in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network.

More with less?

By AARON KAUFFMAN



Over the past ten years, Virginia Mennonite Missions has more than tripled the number of adult mission workers in assignments of a year or more, from 16 to over 50. And that's not including the children of those workers (27 and counting!), or the USA church planters and short-term teams we've supported.

Meanwhile, our level of staffing to support those workers has remained nearly the same—the equivalent of about 9 or 10 full-time staff. More surprisingly, undesignated contributions—donations given to be used “where needed most”—have actually decreased by about 15%. How is it possible for VMissions to do more with the same, or even a little less?

One way we've expanded our ministry is by partnering in the sending of mission workers with other agencies. A decade ago, my wife Laura and I were among the first to go out as “jointly appointed workers” with VMissions and Mennonite Mission Network. We had the support and awareness of our home community through VMissions, as well as access to an arena of ministry where Network had the long-standing relationship. It was a win-win situation, and continues to be for the 40% of our workers in this kind of partnered assignment.

We've also increased our capacity by restructuring our staff. In 2011 we moved from a structure in which most staff reported directly to the president and met together to make decisions, to one in which we have four teams, each with its own team leader. Currently, Lynn Suter heads up our International Ministries Team, Skip Tobin

leads our USA Ministries Team, Jan Liskey oversees the Support Services Team, and Sherah-Leigh Gerber runs our Advancement Team. Together, those four team leaders meet with me on what we call our Leadership Council. This structure has empowered our staff to make decisions in a more efficient way.

A third crucial change has been in the way we support people in mission assignments. VMissions used to receive general donations from churches and individuals, which we then divided out among the various ministries we supported. If the total “pot” of funds got stretched thin, we had to make difficult decisions about curtailing ministries. Around the turn of the millennium, we began to transition to a Mission Support Team (MST) model. MSTs are volunteer groups of friends, family and church members who gather around a particular missionary to provide personal and spiritual support, as well as to give leadership to the fundraising task. While some have lamented this change, it has increased our capacity to raise funds by 50%. What a blessing!

The phrase, “more with less,” has expressed the Mennonite values of good stewardship and sustainable living since at least the 1970s, when the cookbook by that name was first published. I am deeply grateful for the creative thinking and volunteer support that have allowed VMissions to accomplish more with the same, or even a little less, in the past decade. May God continue to grant us wisdom for the years to come.

Aaron Kauffman
President
Virginia Mennonite Missions

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ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS GIFTS



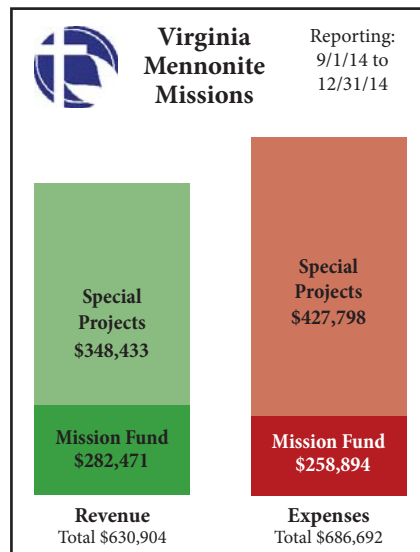
Christmas shoebox distribution in Montenegro, one of the Alternative Christmas Gift projects. Photo by OM International

ACG projects expand the scope of ministry

Thanks to your generosity, more than \$3,500 was contributed through the Alternative Christmas Gift project. Our workers are so grateful for these funds, which support projects that go beyond the scope of their budgets.

These alternative gifts make a tangible difference in the lives of those connected to our workers around the globe. From school supplies for refugees in Ecuador, to shoeboxes distributed in Montenegro, providing for the physical needs of people is a great support to the ongoing relationships and witness.

Our work is dependent on your generosity. Thank you for being part of God's plan of provision for kingdom work around the world.



Mission Fund (general giving by households and churches)
Special Projects (giving toward specific mission workers or ministries)

Winter Delegate Session to feature Conrad Kanagy

Conference delegates are invited to Winter Delegate Session on February 7 at Waynesboro Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va.



Conrad L. Kanagy will facilitate a presentation and discussion on data from the national pastoral survey of Mennonite Church USA, as well as the Virginia Conference pastoral survey. He will examine this data and analyze it with an eye towards the questions: “How do we move from here?” and “What is our outcome?”

Kanagy is Professor of Sociology at Elizabethtown College, Pa., where he has taught since 1993. From 2000-2005 he was lead pastor of Elizabethtown Mennonite Church and since October 2011 has again been serving in that role. Conrad was born in Covington, Kentucky, and grew up in Belleville, Pa. His undergraduate degree is from Wheaton College in Illinois and his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees are from Penn State University. From 2005-2007, he was director of the Mennonite Member Profile of Mennonite Church USA and authored *Road Signs for the Journey* (Herald Press) as a result of that project. In 2008, he conducted a study of Mennonite church planters in the U.S. and in 2010 the Global South profile described in *Winds of the Spirit*. Conrad and his wife Heidi live in Elizabethtown, Pa. They are parents of one adult son.

Registration begins at 8:15 a.m.; the meeting begins at 9:00. A minimum offering of \$10 is requested to cover lunch and miscellaneous expenses for the event. Contact Anieta McCracken to confirm your attendance: <anieta.mccracken@virginiaconference.org> or (540) 434-9727.

Fourth Pastoral Leadership Consultation will explore “God’s Gift of Sexuality” with David and Shana Boshart

Pastors and credentialed leaders in Virginia Mennonite Conference are invited to the fourth Pastoral Leadership Consultation on May 15 at Mountain View Mennonite Church, Hickory, N.C.

David and Shana Boshart will present from their research, writings and experiences on “God’s Gift of Sexuality.”

David has been a Mennonite pastor for over 28 years. In 2010, he was appointed Executive Conference Minister for Central Plains Mennonite Conference. David is also a member of the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA and has been nominated to become Moderator-Elect in 2015.

David holds a Ph.D. in Leadership

Studies from Andrews University with an emphasis on missional theology. He is the author of the book *Becoming Missional: Denominations and New Church Development in Complex Social Contexts* as well as *Sex and Faith*, a Bible study guide on male sexuality for the *Closer than a Brother Series* (Faith and Life Press).

David is married to Shana, who works for Central Plains Mennonite Conference as Conference Minister for Christian Formation. They have three adult sons.



Please note a different starting time than other Consultations. This will begin at 10:00 a.m. and will end at 4:00 p.m.

Lunch will be provided by the church; there is a suggested \$10 donation to cover the meal. Coordinate your

own transportation. The Conference will identify persons with vans or capacity for passengers for your convenience.

Contact Anieta McCracken to confirm your attendance at <anieta.mccracken@virginiaconference.org> or (540) 434-9727.

LEARNING FROM THE EARLY CHURCH

Ministry Retreat • February 27 - March 1, 2015
Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center

All VMC pastors and credentialed leaders are invited to the Ministry Retreat on “Learning from the Early Church.”



Speaker Alan Kreider invites us to discover the way forward in our post-Christian world by learning from the early Church. Having spent a lifetime living and thinking about mission in the post-Christendom West, Kreider worked with Mennonite Mission

Network for nearly thirty years, mainly as a missionary in England. He taught at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and is Professor Emeritus of Church History and Mission.

Learn more and register at virginiaconference.org/news/2015-vmc-ministry-retreat. See note on back page about a shared van leaving from Harrisonburg.



Katrina Schmid (front center) poses with some of her students at Lezha Academic Center on a hilltop overlooking the city of Lezhë. Courtesy of author

Meaningful work, God's provision

By **KATRINA SCHMID**

This first-year teaching business literally takes over your life. I am trying to make a practice of taking one day a week to not think or do anything school related for the whole day, but I still find myself thinking about projects I could do, tests I need to make, and how few lesson plans I have completed compared to how many I'm supposed to have completed.

In all reality, I love my job. This is the first week I feel like I can say that, and maybe it is because I have a long weekend. I have had summer jobs in which I work seven hours a day, five days a week, for just a couple months at a time. My workload was far less, the stress was far less crushing, but I could not wait to leave every day and stop thinking about my work.

Here, I will work fifty to sixty hours a week for eight months straight, but the work is life giving. I can honestly say I feel honored to have the responsibility of teaching the students at Lezha Academic Center. For the most part, they are hardworking, funny kids blessed with ingenuity.

I recently read, "Anxiety is the result of envisioning the future without [Christ]." Sometimes, when I think about the fact that I am stuck in this grind until mid-June, I feel just a little anxious. I am honestly not sure how I am going to get everything completed that needs to be finished while also remaining sane. Yet this first month has already been proof that the Lord does provide what I need and sustains me in moments of chaos.

Even though my workload has been steadily increasing, the Lord has made my work more meaningful and life-giving every day. He has shown me that the more energy I put into building relationships, being merciful, generous and kind in the classroom and recognizing when the situations I get myself into are funny (like that one time I wore my shirt inside out), my work becomes less toilsome and more rewarding.



Katrina serves with tranSend as a teacher at Lezha Academic Center, Albania.



of our lives, basically losing ourselves and trying to find us again. We were trying to vacation and relax in the way we knew how, from days of old.

It didn't work. You can't put new wine into

old wine skin. Or it will burst.

I have been trying to put the new wine into my old skin. And a few days ago, I thought I was ready to burst. There was anger and pain and frustration. I was sitting in a dark room for what felt like the hundredth time while Lucy napped. So, I picked up my Bible and began to read. There it was, two chapters in. You can't put new wine into an old skin.

I instantly felt relieved, like all of my pain and frustration had been explained. Not only had it been explained, I now knew what to do. I had to get a new skin.

I am learning that I can be a mom, a wife, a mission worker and enjoy life. Better yet, I am learning that the life I have now will be better than the life I had before, if I allow Jesus to make me into a new wine skin. God is so amazing.



Jeanette serves in Bangkok, Thailand with her husband Adam and their daughter Lucille.

New wineskins, new wine

By **JEANETTE STRODE**

"And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins." —Mark 2:22 (NIV)

I can't tell you how many times I have read Mark 2:22, certainly more than I can count. I've always thought "I get it, you don't put new wine into old skins, check. If I ever deal with wine, then I'll know." Of course I knew there was a deeper application, but I never truly grasped it—until a few days ago.

Adam and I were on vacation with Lucy, and we were having a difficult couple of days. We've never vacationed with a baby, and I think that says it all for anyone that has had this dilemma. Also, we are in one of the most difficult times

Are you interested in serving as a teacher? Virginia Mennonite Missions has a number of teaching opportunities for the next school year. Learn more at vmmissions.org/serve or contact us at info@vmmissions.org or (540) 434-9727.

Milk plant builds trust in Kosova

By WHITNEY SPECHT

My love of working with dairy cows and my desire to follow God has led me here to live and work in the beautiful country of Kosova. God has guided my paths faithfully, and I have sensed His presence throughout my time here.

I have been here for five months, and for four of those months I have had the pleasure of working at a local milk collection and processing center called *Jeta e Re*, which means “new life.”

This has been the most incredible experience for me. I volunteer there three days a week. When I go, I work with another woman—as she fills the bottles of milk, she slides them to me and I stick a label on the bottle.

That may not sound like much, but I



Shkorta works at the milk plant with Whitney. Courtesy photo

would not trade the experiences I have had there in the past four months for anything. I work with six other people and none of

them know English. This has pushed me to learn more of the language and has been a source of great excitement and encouragement when I leave some days realizing I had actually carried on a conversation in the native Albanian language.

It has been an inspiration to hear and see the great things that have happened at the center. A little background: there are many farms in the area that only have a few cows, and the large processing company in the area will not stop at these farms for such a small amount of milk.

So farmers were forced to sell their milk or milk products to people they knew or at the local market and this is not always a way to provide a stable income.

In response to this problem, *Jeta e Re* was started. I have without a doubt seen God at work through the milk center. It has been a light in the community and to the farmers it works with.

At the start of the new business, none of the farmers trusted one another. But now farmers will bring in their neighbors’ milk, trusting they will deliver what they sent. One farmer goes around to ten other farmers each morning collecting their milk and delivering it for them.



Whitney Specht puts labels on bottles of milk at the *Jeta e Re* plant in Kosova. Photo by Martin Rhodes

Even though communication went from being almost impossible when I first started to being much better but still minimal, I have grown to love the people at the center. Through the actions of the people working there and the farmers who come each day, I know without a doubt God is at work, and I’m excited and encouraged to make God’s work there evident to others.



Whitney serves with tranSend in Istog, Kosova.



Vince and LaVonne Ramella, Sid, Bradie and Justin, serve in Kosova with VMissions. While studying the language and culture, they connect and relate to the community. Photo by Martin Rhodes

Kosova at a Glance

*Known in Albanian as Kosova;
in Serbian as Kosovo*

Population: 1,859,203

Area: 4,212 sq mi

Location: Southeastern Europe

Demographics: 92% Albanians, 4% Kosovo Serbs and 4% other groups

Religions: Islam 95.6%, Christianity (Catholic, Orthodox) 3.7%, Other or none: 0.13%

VMissions workers:

Vince and LaVonne Ramella, Sid, Bradie, Justin, serving in Istog in friendship evangelism.

Whitney Specht, serving in Istog with tranSend in dairy herd management and milk processing.

Source: Wikipedia

Gift & Thrift: treasures from around the world in person

By DEBRA KING

For the past several years, Gift & Thrift, Inc., has participated in the Mennonite Central Committee International Volunteer Exchange Program. We have sponsored young adults from Lesotho, Indonesia, Egypt, Argentina, Cambodia, and this year from Tanzania.

Elisante Daniel Lulu is a gift to us—always thoughtful, always expressing gratitude for what he describes as an opportunity to learn. What he may not understand is that we are learning from him through our conversations, his curiosity for how things work, his servant spirit, and the joy with which he lives life.

Elisante works for all three of our divisions by performing bookkeeping duties. He also prepares book orders for shipping in Booksavers of Virginia, and is learning all the facets of operating Artisans' Hope, our fair trade shop. It seems that every day he brings new questions—about our operations, about faith, about life. Through

him, we have been nudged to look at our role in the kingdom, and how our actions affect our brothers and sisters nearby and around the world. Through him, I am personally challenged to develop the curious nature I was born with in order to seek creative solutions to issues we face as a community.

May we realize the value of building new relationships—relationships that open our hearts to people from a variety of cultural, socio-economic, educational, ideological, and experiential backgrounds.

Thank you, Elisante, Sophea, Viki, Shenouda, Singghi, and Phuthehi. May we honor your time with us—developing awareness, actively seeking solutions, and living joyfully.



Debra is General Manager of Gift & Thrift, Inc.



Elisante Daniel Lulu sorts merchandise to sell at Gift & Thrift. A native of Tanzania, he volunteers through an MCC exchange program. Courtesy of author

Pleasant View, Inc. transforms choir into worship team

By PAMELA L. MILLER

Pleasant View, Inc. (PVI) has a long musical history. Our choir began in the early 1980s when the choir from the Mt. Carmel United Brethren Church in Christ started singing at the Broadway Day Program on Fridays.

Phyllis Cowger, Lois Spitzer, Bob Davis and Maretta Crider continued to

volunteer and started taking the choir to sing at churches in the area. Pleasant View's choir members have had the joy of traveling throughout Virginia and Pennsylvania, singing for churches and organizations, and building long-lasting relationships.

When Dave Gullman became Pleasant View's pastor, he added the elements of drama and scripture reading to the choir to build the worship team.

This past year Ashley Shoemaker, PVI's Harrisonburg Day Program Coordinator, started the bell choir.

The bell choir gives those in the worship team who don't feel comfortable speaking, reading, or singing another way they can participate and express themselves.

At this year's fall banquet we featured our worship team and bell choir. Dave and Ashley designed a musical story



The bell choir plays.

to complement Joanie Hanshaw's presentation. Members of the worship team share their talents with area churches and organizations. To keep the message fresh and exciting for all involved, the program changes periodically based on the liturgical calendar.

If you'd like to invite the worship team to present at your church or organization, please contact Dave Gullman at (540) 433-8960. You can stay up to date with our performance schedule on our website calendar (pleasantviewinc.org) or our Facebook page (Pleasant View Inc).

Pamela is Development Director for Pleasant View, Inc.



Members of the Pleasant View choir enjoy singing and being together. Photos courtesy of author

FEBRUARY 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Pray for the leadership and ministries of Calvary Community Church, Hampton, Va. This dynamic congregation seeks to build community, restore hope and transform lives through their kingdom presence in the community.	2 Ask God to energize and encourage the hearts of Lezha Academic Center teachers as they begin a new semester. May they rest in the knowledge of God's love for them, their students, and the people of Albania.	3 Praise God for the generous giving towards VMissions' Alternative Christmas Giving projects. Ask God to bless these gifts and the people who will receive them.	4 Jonathan Cranston, tranSender in the Philippines, asks for prayer for those affected by December's Typhoon Hagupit, many of whom are still struggling to rebuild their lives from the 2013 Typhoon Haiyan.	5 Pray with the Ramellas for the nation of Kosovo, whose government has been at a standstill since June, and for the many people who are affected by the already struggling economy.	6 Lift Beldor Mennonite Church and pastor James Akerson up in prayer. This rural congregation near Elkton, Va., is helping people find Christ as their Savior and Lord and ministering to surrounding community needs.	7 Pray for Klementina Shahini, Lezha Academic Center principal, as she participates in a Mennonite Education Agency gathering. Pray for encouragement and vision as she networks with other educators.
8 Pray for Powhatan Mennonite Church and their pastoral transition. This congregation seeks to invite people to trust in Jesus, build one another up in the faith, and equip them for ministry and service.	9 Brook Hostetter plans to return to Peru this month to teach music at PROMESA. Ask God to give her creativity, perseverance, and purpose in her teaching and in her relationship with her students.	10 Praise God for Steve and Laura Campbell's desire to see Montenegrians know Christ. Pray that they will feel God's leading each day and rest in His grace and hope.	11 Thank God for the many opportunities Joel has to share Christ with his Chinese friends and students. Ask God to grow the seeds that are being planted in their hearts.	12 Pray for Weavers Mennonite Church and Phil Kanagy's leadership there. Weavers joins together to be transformed through worship, to nurture one another, to be equipped to serve Jesus Christ, and to carry out His mission in the world.	13 Praise God for VMissions' dedicated board members. Ask God to guide their discussions and direction during the board meetings today and tomorrow.	14 Praise God for the engagement of Angelica and Juan, members of Jesus' Deaf Church in Belize. Pray that they would be rooted in Christ and a blessing to the church.
15 Pray for Mount Vernon Mennonite Church, Grottoes, Va., and pastors Al & Rose Huyard. They desire to grow toward maturity in Christ; to share with each other; and to serve our world.	16 Give thanks for the joy and purpose that tranSender Katrina Schmid finds in her teaching position at the Lezha Academic Center and her opportunity to work with students to help them achieve their goals.	17 Praise God for those who are in conversation about participating in VMissions' tranSend program next year. Ask God to place a deep sense of call on their lives as He directs their steps.	18 The hearts of the Horsts and Strodes are heavy with the sexual brokenness that is prevalent in Bangkok. Pray with them for God's kingdom to come in these situations.	19 Ask God to provide opportunities for Sid, Bradie, and Justin Ramella to connect with neighborhood kids and for relationships and language to continue to develop.	20 As tranSenders Caleb and Romi Kiefer live on a hilltop in Jamaica, pray that they would be like "a city on a hill that cannot be hidden" and that many would see their passion and love for the Lord.	21 Richard and Elsie Bowman hope to return to Albania at the end of this month. Pray for Richard's continued healing following hip replacement surgery and for their re-entry into the Albanian context.
22 Lift Grace Mennonite Fellowship and the ministry of pastor Richard Early up in prayer. This Lacey Springs, Va., congregation is a community-based church focusing on service and mission, locally and globally.	23 Pray that the house helper of a VMissions family in South Asia, a new believer, will grow in faith and knowledge of God. Ask God to bless the relationship that the family has with her.	24 Pray for those living in the Roma camp in Podgorica, Montenegro, near Steve and Laura Campbell. Ask God to provide for their needs and to bring the hope of Christ to their broken situations.	25 Pray for the missional network that David and Rebekka Stutzman are launching in Germany. Ask for guidance and encouragement in continuing what God has put on their hearts.	26 Praise God for the growth of the church in Lezhe, Albania, and ask Him to provide a larger location for the church to gather and worship.	27 Pray for Manantial de Vida, a congregation in Harrisonburg, Va., and the pastoral ministry of Carlos Malvaez. May this church be a light in the neighborhood and the larger community.	28 Jacob and Hosanna will be on home leave for the next several months. Ask God to refresh them and bless their time connecting with family and friends.

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God is Light "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 —1 John 1:5-9 (NRSV)

Prayer calendar sponsored by:



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Virginia Mennonite Missions
Virginia Mennonite Conference
901 Parkwood Drive
Harrisonburg, VA 22802-2498

Announcements

Delegates: Winter Delegate Session for Virginia Mennonite Conference will be February 7 at Waynesboro Mennonite Church. It will start at 8:15 a.m. and conclude at 3 p.m. Please bring \$10/person to cover the meal cost. Register by emailing anieta.mccracken@virginiaconference.org

Join the **WCRC Marriage Retreat**, February 20-22. We invite you to a weekend getaway with lots of time to really connect with your spouse. Jim and Rosemary Hess of Transformation Ministries Center will be speaking and leading our sessions. For more information or to register online, go to www.wcrc.info. Contact WCRC Program Director, Jenn Hill—programs@wcr.info or (866) 566-9272.

Pastors: If you live in the Harrisonburg area and are interested in attending the **VMC Ministry Retreat** at WCRC, there will be a van leaving from the Conference Center (901 Parkwood Dr., Harrisonburg) at 2:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 27, and returning Sunday, March 1. Cost is \$15 round trip. Contact Skip Tobin at skip.tobin@vmmissions.org to make arrangements.

You are invited to join in celebrating Steve Carpenter's 60th birthday on Saturday, February 28 at 7 p.m., in Park View Mennonite Church's fellowship hall. Come early, beginning at 6 p.m., for the release of Steve's book *Mennonites and Media*. The evening will include light refreshments, a movie and dessert. In lieu of gifts, donations are encouraged to be made to MennoMedia. RSVP to (540) 908-3934 or angelab@mennomedia.org

A **Women's Community Bible Study** is being offered at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church using Beth Moore's study: *Children of the Day: I & II Thessalonians*. Find encouragement for living the Christian life now and hope for when Christ returns. Sessions will be Tuesdays, March 3 through April 28. Morning sessions will be 9-11 and evening sessions will be 6:30-8:15. Registration and a \$20 fee are due by Feb. 22. After that, you may need to order your own book. For registration details, contact Jeannie Smith at (540) 434-4361.

Attention men: Register now for the Men's Retreat at Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center, March 27-29. This will be a time of meaningful worship, inspired teaching, great fellowship, and recreation. Our speaker is Leonard Dow, pastor of Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia. He is a gifted and dynamic speaker. For more information or to register go to www.wcrc.info or call us at (757) 566-2256.

Refugee Sponsorship Grant: Harrisonburg District congregations are eligible to receive a grant from the district (\$200) if they are serving alone (or with another congregation) in sponsoring a local refugee household. For more information, please contact Mark Keller at mkeller@hmcchurch.org or Jennifer Davis Sensenig jennifer.davis.sensenig@cmcva.org of the Mission Advisory Committee.

If you are interested in sponsoring the prayer calendar, please contact Sarah Showalter at (540) 434-9727, sarah.showalter@vmmissions.org

UPCOMING TRIP

Imperial China Tour: October 7-24, 2015 "A Learning Tour Mixed with Adventure" planned by Mennonite Partners in China and TravelVenture Tours. Visit Beijing, Great Wall, Forbidden City, Xian, Terracotta Warriors Museum, Sichuan Province, Chengdu, Nanchong, Yangtze River Cruise, Three Gorges Dam and Shanghai. Contact Ed Bontrager for brochure at (540) 438-8304 or eebontrager@comcast.net. Visit travelventuretours.com for full itinerary.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY

Big Spring Mennonite Church is seeking a half-time pastor to lead a small, vibrant congregation in Luray, Va., known for our generosity and love for children. Big Spring seeks a pastoral candidate with an Anabaptist perspective who will lead/partner in nurturing spiritual growth, providing pastoral care, and building connections in our community. If this opportunity interests you, please contact Ed Rissler at jerissler@comcast.net or (540) 833-2962.